



JAN. 4, 2005

HEALTH ALERT NETWORK HEALTH UPDATE

Pertussis Cases in Infants in North Dakota

In 2004, a record number of pertussis cases were reported in North Dakota. Sporadic cases continue to be reported throughout the state. Since November 29, 2004, five laboratory-confirmed cases of pertussis have been identified in infants younger than 6 months in Ward and Mountrail counties.

Pertussis is a serious disease that can lead to pneumonia, encephalopathy, or death in infants and unvaccinated children. Adults, teens, and vaccinated children often have mild symptoms that mimic bronchitis or asthma. **Adults and adolescents are usually the source of the disease in infants.**

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) reminds providers to consider pertussis as a differential diagnosis in patients presenting with the following symptoms:

- Prolonged cough
- Cough with paroxysms (uncontrollable bursts of coughing)
- Whoop
- Post-tussive gagging/vomiting

The NDDoH recommends that people presenting with the above symptoms be considered as presumptive pertussis and should be treated.

Testing for pertussis should include a specimen for both culture and polymerase chain reaction (PCR). Pertussis testing kits are available at most major medical centers and local public health units in North Dakota and from the NDDoH's Division of Microbiology. The cost for pertussis testing by the NDDoH is \$45. Test results should be available within 48 hours after specimen is received at the laboratory.

The NDDoH does not recommend testing of non-symptomatic persons; i.e., if a person does not have a cough, there is no need for testing.

All persons identified as contacts to confirmed pertussis cases should be treated. Only the antibiotics listed on the NDDoH treatment recommendations document are effective in treating pertussis. (The treatment recommendations document can be accessed at www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Documents/Immunization/PertussisTreatment.pdf. The NDDoH will refer contacts to their primary care provider for evaluation and treatment.

Symptomatic contacts should be prescribed antibiotics and advised to exclude themselves from all activities (e.g., day care, work, school) until medication has been taken for five days. Guidelines for treatment of pertussis and a pertussis fact sheet are attached.

For updates on the number of pertussis cases in the state and for information regarding pertussis, visit the NDDoH Immunization Program website at www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Immunization.

Please contact the NDDoH Division of Disease Control at 701.328.2378 or toll-free at 800.472.2180 with any questions or concerns regarding this issue.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- *Health Alert conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.*
- *Health Advisory provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.*
- *Health Update provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; no immediate action necessary.*
- *Health Information provides general information that is not necessarily considered to be of an emergent nature.*

This message is being sent to local public health units, clinics, hospitals, physicians, tribal health, North Dakota Nurses Association, North Dakota Long Term Care Association, North Dakota Healthcare Association, North Dakota Medical Association, and hospital public information officers.